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FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5378
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 7716
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1821
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 1031
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 2344
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY 2240
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1343
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 6583
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0195
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1704

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000532

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#) [GM](#) [KDEM](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS HANGING ON BY A THREAD

REF: TASHKENT 512

Classified By: AMB. JON R. PURNELL, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Deutsche Welle stringer Obid Shabanov told Poloff that the MFA revoked his accreditation after he wrote a report about Uzbek migrant laborers freezing to death on a bus headed to Russia. Only one Deutsche Welle stringer is still accredited. Several international wire agency correspondents could also be negatively affected by a recent Cabinet of Ministers media resolution. The Associated Press correspondent is without accreditation, and the Reuters and Agence France Press correspondents, accreditations expire this summer. End summary.

¶2. (C) Deutsche Welle Bukhara-based stringer Obid Shabanov, whose accreditation was revoked by the MFA on March 15 (reftel), told Poloff that he had angered the GOU with a report on the death of Uzbek migrant laborers, which the MFA claims the GOU investigated and found to be false. (Note: Shabanov was the recipient of a now completed U.S. Embassy Democracy Commission grant for a journalist discussion club in Bukhara. End note.) Shabanov's report stated that 30 migrant laborers from Bukhara froze to death in Ustyurt in the Karakalpak desert after their bus broke down on its way to Russia. Shabanov added that the story is well-known in Bukhara. (Note: The GOU is reluctant to acknowledge the scale of labor trafficking to Russia and Kazakhstan, and has failed to regularize migration flows and improve conditions for workers. End note.)

¶3. (C) Shabanov told poloff that only one Deutsche Welle stringer, Yuri Chernogayev, is still accredited. At the March 15 MFA meeting, Chernogayev was warned not to cooperate with stringers lacking accreditation. (Note: Since the release of the Cabinet of Ministers resolution (reftel), which bars stringers from working without accreditation, Deutsche Welle stringers Natalia Bushueva, Solih Yahyoyev, and Sayora Ruzutkova have stopped working. End note.)

¶4. (C) Several correspondents for international wire agencies told Emboffs that the resolution could threaten their ability to work. Mansur Mirovalev of the Associated Press is not accredited. Reuters correspondent Shamil Baygin's accreditation will expire in July, and Agence France Presse correspondent Muhammed Sharif Mamatkulov's, in June. (Note: French DCM Christophe Le Rigoleur told Poloff that the resolution concerns the French Embassy, and that the French mission is in close contact with AFP's regional Almaty

office regarding Mamatkulov,s status. End note.)

15. (C) Comment: The Uzbeks have made no secret of their dissatisfaction with criticism in the international press. It is likely that someone in the Karimov regime decided that eliminating independent media outlets and denying accreditation would help solve the problem. In reality, the new decree will likely have the exact opposite effect, intensifying the critical articles rather than silencing them. The pressures on Deutsche Welle are deeply troubling, especially following on the heels of the closures of BBC, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty offices. There are few sources left to inform the world about developments in Uzbekistan.

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